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Beef still a staple in all shapes, sizes
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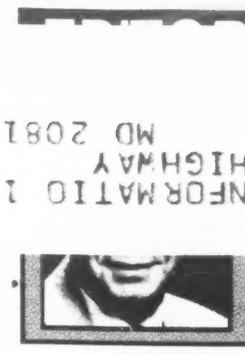

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Nation's
# Restaurant News®
*The Weekly Newspaper of the Food-Service Industry*

Vol. 23, No. 29 | Published every Monday by Lebhar-Friedman Inc.; $3 a copy, $29.50 a year | July 17, 1989

NRN Photo

Connoisseurs reach for a taste in sampling tents at the Food and Wine Classic.

# Lighter foods, richer tastes anchor new menu strategies

**By Rick Telberg**

SNOWMASS, Colo. — Facing an increasingly calorie- and cholesterol-conscious clientele, restaurateurs are developing a host of new strategies for lightening menus without sacrificing rich or innovative flavors.

Many are replacing butter and cream with flavored oils and vinegars. Others are using a wider variety of meats on their menus, adding such items as lamb, lobster, and venison, where they once had only beef, chicken and fish. Still others are using fruity flavorings, such as lime instead of lemon.

The move toward light but rich foods emerged as a key issue at the seventh annual Food and Wine Classic, sponsored by Food and Wine magazine at this ski resort near Aspen, Colo. The event attracted about 1,300 culinary aficionados.

They attended seminars on wine tasting, watched cooking demonstrations by a few of the nation's leading chef-owners, and toured four huge outdoor tents to taste the wares of

(See **FOOD CONFAB**, page 49)

**What's Hot In Aspen/Snowmass**
See page 8

## FOOD WATCH

### *Now they're cookin'*

**SNOWMASS, Colo. — Ten leading chefs were honored at the Food and Wine Classic here as the "Best New Chefs" of 1989.**

**They were chosen by the editors of Food and Wine magazine and honored at a banquet at which they were invited to cook some of their specialties.**

**Here are the winners and the dishes they prepared:**

*(See **FOODWATCH**, page 49)*

# Operators battle summertime blues

## *Explore new promos, ventures*

**By Jack Hayes**

Fine-dining operators across the nation are waging a summer war against the new breed of casual upstarts who are stealing patrons with trendy menus, upscaled service, and eclectic design.

Injured by a nonstop flood of competition from the hot casual-restaurant segment, fine-dining operators are throwing a flurry of defensive blows — everything from summer menu promotions to full-scale restructuring of concepts.

"We're going back to every fundamental we know — which includes knocking on doors and asking for the business," said J.W. "Slug" Claiborne, who operates in Charlotte and Chapel Hill, N.C., and Myrtle Beach, S.C. Claiborne has ordered store managers and assistants to make five personal calls a day to deliver fresh-baked brownies to potential diners.

In Boston, Jerry Hendricks of the posh Bay Tower Room, overlooking Faneuil Hall mall, is targeting the mid-week diner with a $25 certificate that can be redeemed on the next visit. Another promotion plays up a complimentary shrimp bowl between 5 and 7 p.m.

"We're seeing a decrease

*(See **SUMMER**, page 49)*

# Western Sizzlin axes logo, realigns concept

**By Jack Hayes**

DALLAS — Moving the concept away from its steak roots, the new management team at Western Sizzlin is sending the chain's 27-year-old steak-house logo to the slaughterhouse and broadening the menu.

Attempting to expand its reach as a family feeder in the budget casual-dining segment, the 550-unit operation — headed up by Pizza Hut founder Frank Carney — is rolling a new lunch menu and a new name: Western Sizzlin Restaurants.

In the bargain, Western Sizzlin is aligning itself with such concepts as Sizzler Steak Seafood Salad and Bonanza Family Restaurants, which have upgraded and broadened their food focus to escape the stagnant "steak-only" stereotype.

"According to research, consumers see all budget steak houses as the same operation; we need to break out of that mold," said Michael Stack, who became

*(See **WESTERN SIZZLIN**, page 49)*

# Trusthouse buys Creative Gourmets

**By Bill Carlino**

CHARLESTOWN, Mass. — Creative Gourmets, a stylish food management company based here, has been acquired for an undisclosed sum by Trusthouse Forte Food Services Inc., the domestic arm of Gardner Merchant, a leading European caterer.

A 14-year old company, Creative Gourmets has developed a reputation for providing food-service to prestigious accounts, including Harvard Law School and the Museum of Science, in addition to catering high-profile weddings and social events.

Neil Cheadle, executive vice president of Trusthouse Forte Food Services, said Creative Gourmet's client portfolio was one of the major reasons for the sale.

"They operate with a lot of flair and have a good client portfolio, as we do," Cheadle said. "We've been wanting to get our foot in the Boston area for a long time. The sale creates a good synergy."

Cheadle stressed that no layoffs would occur as a result of the sale, and Elmont will continue in his capacity as president.

"What this has done for the company and our employees is give us a chance to grow with an international company," said Stephen Elmont, president and co-founder of Creative Gourmets. "We're very good at what we do, and with the expanded resources offered by Trusthouse, we'll be even better."

Creative Gourmets has about 50 accounts with annual sales of

*(See **CREATIVE**, page 4)*

Michael Bailey, left, signs deal with Stephen Elmont.

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Nation's Restaurant News (ISSN 0028-0518) is published weekly, every Monday except the last Monday in December, by Lebhar-Friedman Inc., 425 Park Ave., New York, N.Y. 10022. Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y., and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send change of address to: Subscription Department, Nation's Restaurant News, 305 Madison Ave. Suite 535, New York, N.Y. 10165-0079.

For change of address, please write Subscription Department, Nation's Restaurant News, 305 Madison Ave. Suite 535, New York, N.Y. 10165-0079. Six weeks' notice is required. Please send old and new address and zip codes. If possible, include mailing label.

Vol. 23, No. 29 July 17, 1989

## NEWS DIGEST

# Wis. raises minimum wage, but adds new-job exception

MADISON, Wis. — State officials have raised the minimum wage by 30 cents, to $3.65 an hour, making Wisconsin the 13th state to raise its pay floor above the federal minimum.

However, legislators granted employers the concession of a sub-minimum "probationary" wage for newly hired employees. Workers are entitled to $3.45 per hour during their first 120 days on the job.

Legislation to boost the federal minimum wage to $4.65 was vetoed by President Bush. Sen. Ted Kennedy, the Massachusetts Democrat, has vowed to draft a new pay-hike proposal.

# Twistee Treat seeks bankruptcy protection

NORTH FT. MYERS, Fla. — Twistee Treat Corp. and its Twistee Treat Financial Corp. subsidiary have filed petitions for reorganization under Chapter 11 of the U.S. Bankruptcy Code.

Twistee Treat, which operates a chain of about 45 ice-cream stores, said it made the decision to seek protection from its creditors based on "continuing losses of the companies and their inability to meet over-burdening cash-flow requirements."

The company said the filing would grant time to seek such remedies as a "reverse merger" or cash infusion from an investor.

# Judge sentences servers for understating tips

WASHINGTON — A federal judge here has sentenced eight waiters to part-time jail terms for failing to report the full amount of their tipped income to the Internal Revenue Service.

The servers were ordered to spend their nights and weekends in low-security correctional facilities for at least three months. In addition, each was fined $1,000 and directed to pay the full amount of their IRS debt, which included overdue taxes, accrued interest, and penalties.

The judge granted permission for the defendants to continue working at their restaurant jobs. The crew failed to report a total of $145,000 during a four-year period.

# Dunkin's suitors say financing is secured

TORONTO — Pressing their joint pursuit of Dunkin' Donuts Inc., Kingsbridge Capital Group and Cara Operations Ltd. said they have secured $275 million to finance a takeover of the donut maker.

The duo, which has offered to buy all Dunkin's outstanding shares for $43 each, has estimated that the hostile takeover would cost a total of $256 million.

The suitors also disclosed that their lawsuit to overturn certain of Dunkin's "shark repellents" were about to be heard by a Delaware court.

Dunkin' has spurned the $43-per-share bid as "inadequate" and has refused to meet with representatives of Cara or Kingsbridge.

# Hilton's Conrad hotel chain enters into 12 joint ventures

NEW YORK — Conrad International Hotels Corp., the international unit of Hilton Hotels Corp., said it has signed joint-venture agreements to open 12 luxury hotels worldwide by 1993.

The agreements are a departure for Conrad, which has typically kept its equity stake in hotels below 20 percent.

Among the sites of the new properties are Brussels, Belgium; London; Hong Kong; Dublin, Ireland; Monte Carlo; and Cancun, Mexico.

Conrad, which operates one resort hotel in Queensland, Australia, and another in St. Martin, plans to open 40 hotels within the next nine years. The properties will compete with Hilton hotels, which are operated by a separate company called Hilton International — who obtained rights more than a decade ago to use the Hilton name outside of the United States.

# Marriott purchases stake in child-care concern

WASHINGTON — Marriott Corp. has taken another step in the diversification of its contract services unit with the purchase of an equity stake in a provider of corporate child care.

The food-service and hospitality giant's stake in Corporate Childcare Inc. of Tennessee carries with it the option to acquire the company in two years.

Marriott recently completed the acquisition of United Healthserv Inc., a facility management concern with sales of more than $250 million.

# LA's Ambassador Hotel sold to office developer

LOS ANGELES — The landmark Ambassador Hotel here has been sold by the Schine family to S.D. Malkin Properties, a developer of office buildings, for an undisclosed amount.

The 500-room property occupied a 23.5-acre plot in an area zoned for business, making it one of the most desirable real-estate parcels in Los Angeles. However, the sellers had been unable to find a buyer for three years. Many investors had ignored the opportunity because of concerns that Los Angelenos would seek to preserve the facility as an historical landmark, preventing a re-development of the site.

The family had reportedly been asking more than $65 million for the 68-year-old hotel.

# Tyson brings Holly Farms under its wing for $1.29B

SPRINGDALE, Ark. — Tyson Foods Inc. has agreed to pay $70 a share, or $1.29 billion, for Holly Farms Corp., ending an eight month brawl with ConAgra Inc. for supremacy in the $11 billion U.S. chicken industry.

As part of a settlement approved by the Delaware Chancery Court, Tyson will also pay ConAgra $50 million to terminate its merger agreement with Holly.

Tyson's winning bid was 35-percent higher than its original tender offer launched in October.

# Arby's eyes trial of deluxe country-fried steak sandwich

ATLANTA — Arby's Inc. said it will test market a new super deluxe version of its country-fried steak sandwich this fall.

The new product, an extension of its line of country-fried steak sandwiches, will feature lettuce, tomatoes, mayonnaise, pickles, onions, ketchup, and mustard.

New products have been instrumental in the sandwich-chain operator's recent turnaround, helping fuel an 18-percent gain in systemwide sales in 1988, to $1.16 billion.

# GAO says import inspectors spend little time inspecting

WASHINGTON — Some government food inspectors responsible for the safety of imported products spend more than 90 percent of their time doing paperwork or bureaucratic tasks far removed from the actual inspection of food, General Accounting Office investigators have charged.

In a new report that raises fresh questions about the safety of food products available to the nation's restaurants, GAO researchers reported that Food and Drug Administration food inspectors in San Juan and Cincinnati spend only 9 percent of the work week on actual physical inspection of imported food, including restaurant mainstays such as cheese and fruit.

The average time used for physical inspection of imported food in the 10 cities surveyed was 22.2 percent.

The limited time devoted to hands-on inspection is expected to fuel the controversy over the safety of imported food which was triggered by discovery of poisoned Chilean grapes earlier this year. According to the G.A.O., about 40 percent of the 23,549 imported food samples analyzed by the F.D.A. in 1987 failed to meet agency standards.

FINANCIAL NEWS

# Operating profits rise 23% at General Mills restaurants

By Rajan Chaudhry

MINNEAPOLIS — General Mills, the restaurant and consumer foods company based here, said the addition of 100 new Red Lobster and Olive Garden restaurants helped drive post-tax profits up 12 percent, to $315.3 million, on a 13-percent rise in sales, to $5.62 billion, for its fiscal year ended May 28.

Sales at the company's restaurant group advanced 24 percent year-over-year, to $1.62 billion, said General Mills, while operating profits climbed 23 percent, to $127.7 million.

Average weekly sales in the latest year outstripped those posted last year by 33 percent at Red Lobster Canada, by 7.7 percent at Red Lobster USA, and by 3 percent at The Olive Garden.

Red Lobster Canada added 5 units, bringing its year-end total to 46. Red Lobster USA added 42 units — including the purchase of 26 Seafood Broiler outlets in Southern California that were converted to Red Lobsters — for a total of 444 units. And Olive Garden added 53 units, bringing its total to 145.

For the May-ended 12 months, the company's net income rocketed 46 percent, to $414.3 million, boosted by a net gain of $169 million from its discontinued York's cafeteria, Talbots and Eddie Bauer retail, and Vroman's frozen novelties operations.

Red Lobster began as a single seafood restaurant in 1968.

The $169 million gain was partially offset by the cumulative effect — $70 million — of changing to accrual accounting for post-retirement health benefits, the company said.

In the latest quarter, a charge of $22.1 million from discontinued operations cut net income by 35 percent, to $35.6 million, on a sales gain of 15 percent, to $1.44 billion.

Restaurant operating profits gained 29 percent for the quarter, to $41.1 million, on a 24-percent increase in sales to $434.3 million.

In fiscal 1989, General Mills repurchased 3.5 million shares of common stock, 1.5 million of which went to replace shares purchased in June from the company's treasury to complete the formation of a new Employee Stock Ownership Plan.

Recently, ESOPs have gained favor as a takeover defense because they place large numbers of shares in friendly hands.

General Mills noted that it intends to make further periodic share purchases on the open market.

Average shares outstanding declined to 81.9 million for fiscal 1989, from 87 million in fiscal 1988.

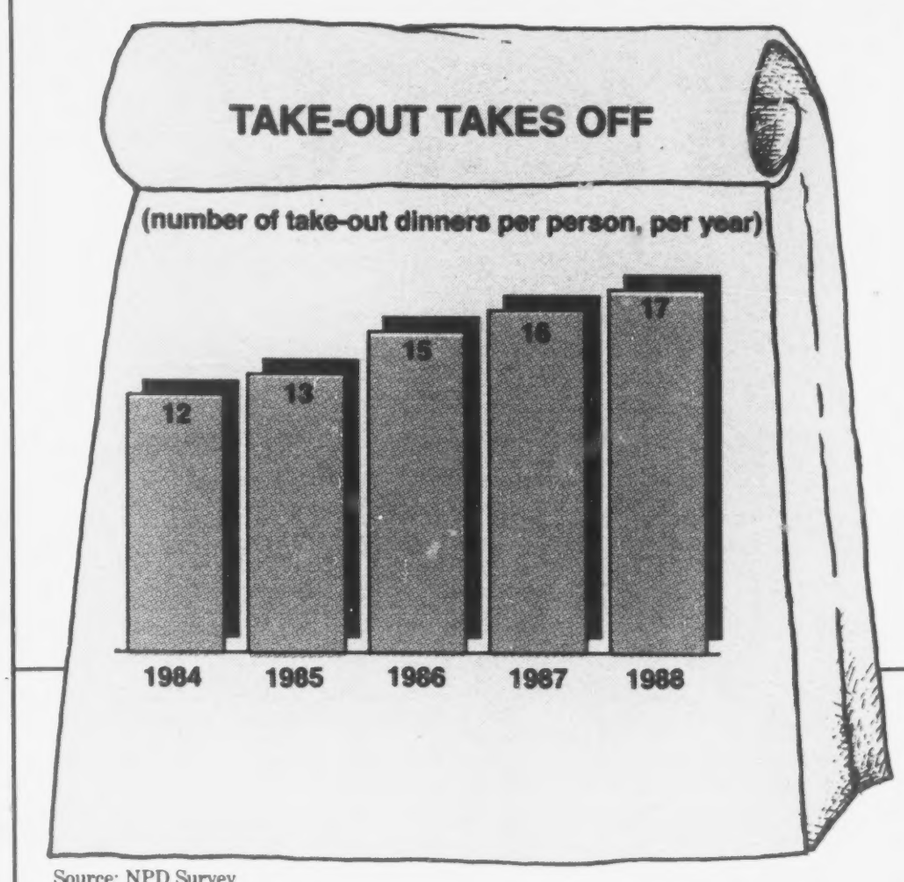
The company's consumer food sales grew 9 percent, to about 4 billion, for the year. And operating profits for the foods group — which includes brands like Raisin Bran, Cheerios, Betty Crocker, and Yoplait yogurt — increased 7 percent to $452.4 million.

NRN Photo

An Olive Garden Italian restaurant in Temple Terrace, Fla.

## FACT FILE

*A look at the statistics shaping the industry*




Source: NPD Survey

## NRN FINANCIAL DIGEST

### Perkins sells eight restaurants

MEMPHIS — Perkins Family Restaurants L.P. said it has sold eight Denver-area restaurants to Colorado-based Vista Restaurants Inc. for $2.3 million.

Perkins has entered into long-term lease agreements for the land and buildings at the eight sites, which will continue to operate under the Perkins banner, the company said.

Perkins and Vista also signed a five-year development agreement that gives Vista exclusive rights for the Denver area.

Terms of the area-development agreement were not disclosed.

### Lindner keeps Circle K in play

WASHINGTON — Circle K's largest shareholder, Carl Lindner's American Financial Corp., said in a Securities & Exchange Commission filing that it is "prepared to discuss possibly participating in the leveraged acquisition" of the company.

American Financial holds a 38.4 percent stake in the Phoenix, Ariz.-based convenience-store operator.

Lindner said he would be prepared to sell his interest in Circle K if an acquisition proposal accepted by Circle K's board was at a price and on terms he finds acceptable.

Circle K chairman Karl Eller, who holds a 7-percent stake, already has indicated his interest in acquiring the company.

But Eller has entered into a standstill agreement that precludes him from proposing any merger, restructuring or similar transaction — or entering into a binding agreement with any shareholder — without prior approval from Circle K's board.

### Ramada revises restructuring plan

PHOENIX, Ariz. — Ramada Inc. revised the terms of its restructuring to potentially reduce the amount of cash shareholders will receive, but increase the stock they will get in the surviving gaming company, called Aztar Corp.

Under the original plan, Ramada — which agreed in April to sell its hotel business to New World Development Co. of Hong Kong and Prime Motor Inns Inc. of Fairfield, N.J., for $540 million — was to pay its shareholders $7 for each Ramada share plus one-quarter share of stock in Aztar.

Under the new plan, shareholders will receive the $7 minus 40 percent of the amount by which Ramada's common shares exceed $14 on the day the transaction closes. They will also receive one-half share in Aztar per share of Ramada held.

The 40 percent reduction amounts to 5 cents per share for each 12.5-cent increase in the stock price.

The change was made to compensate for taxes Ramada will have to pay if its stock price exceeds $14 a share. At the $14-per-share-price, the transaction would be recorded as a gain for the company, Ramada said.

The transaction is expected to be completed in mid-August, Ramada said.

## FOOD PRICE OUTLOOK

# *Prices drop for green coffee beans*

Prices of **green coffee beans** coming into this country have fallen below last year's level. Reason: failure of the producing and consuming nations to reach agreement on a two-level rate structure within the International Coffee Agreement. Some producing nations want to be able to sell to non-pact countries at a pricing far less than paid by countries, such as the United States, which sign the international agreement. However, expect the pact nations to continue to meet to resolve the issue. Resolution will mean continued high prices for coffee here.

Now that the U.S. Department of Agriculture has determined that there is a larger Florida orange crop than anticipated, **frozen orange juice concentrate** prices will not advance, but may even drop a bit by the fall. Florida will be able to supply over 60 percent of this country's needs. Brazilian juice will make up the difference. A few years ago, as the result of disastrous Florida freezes, Brazilian concentrate amounted to more than 50 percent of the U.S. pack.

Aquaculture is finally affecting **shrimp** prices. Exploding expansion of shrimp farms in China and Ecuador has sent imports volume of medium-sized shrimp (31-35 and 36-40 counts) spiraling up, while prices drop. With other Asian and Latin American countries pushing into large scale production, expect prices to be even lower next year.

The **California apricot** pack is going to be larger, based upon a 21 percent crop increase. By the end of summer, prices should moderate. The only fly in the ointment is the USDA buy of nearly 260,000 cases of 6/10 apricots for school lunch and other feeding programs. Further federal buys could hold prices at last year's levels, considering the small carryover.

— Patt Patterson

# FOCUS | OPINION

Nation's Restaurant News

is published by
LEBHAR-FRIEDMAN INC.
425 Park Ave., New York, NY 10022
212 371-9400
Subscription Services, ext. 379 or 419
Cable Address: LEBHAFRIED
Panafax: 212 838-9487

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Publisher of Nation's Restaurant News, Discount Store News, National Home Center News, Drug Store News, Accounting Today, Chain Store Age Executive (with Shopping Center Age), *APPAREL merchandising*. Affiliates: Business Guides Inc., Lebhar-Friedman Books; Inside Retailing (Newsletter); Chain Store Age News, Japan; Largo Music Inc.

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# Campus nightmare: Industry recruiters

Complaints have been heard across the country from food-service operators who bemoan a lack of qualified applicants for positions in the industry. It is accepted as gospel that the industry faces a severe labor crisis as baby boomers age and there are fewer young people to fill positions.

We previously have emphasized a critical need for Hotel and Restaurant Management Schools to encourage their students to enter food-service careers, which offer so many opportunities for growth, as contrasted with hotels or consulting companies. Nevertheless, graduates still often opt for the temporary glitter of hotel or consulting jobs over a food-service career that would provide a stronger background in the long run.

Meanwhile, restaurants keep missing opportunities to hire older workers, handicapped workers, and others who could help solve the "labor crisis." With the number of employees needed in the food-service industry soaring toward the 10 million mark, popular wisdom holds that the demand is outstripping the supply of qualified applicants.

The other side of the coin was brought home to us in these pages last month by Donna Russo and Tina Gambone, two recent graduates of Widener University's School of Hotel and Restaurant Management, Chester, Pa.

Some readers may view the letter as exaggerated and not typical of the situation. Yet it brought serious recruiting defects out in the open.

When talented students like Russo and Gambone, who both were dedicated to careers in the food-service industry, face obstacles such as they described — obstacles that were corroborated by professors at the school — the industry must come to grips with the fact that food service is not presenting its best image.

The problem has usually been seen in terms of lackadaisical employees and mediocre service — dilemmas that usually start at the top of companies and work their way down. But now we find that recruiters don't always present the most professional image either.

Unfortunately, this becomes a double whammy when recruiters deal with enthusiastic students who are at the most impressionable stages of their budding careers.

While company blurbs and pamphlets emphasize success stories and "make us want to be a member of the team," the two students asserted, "the people handling our interviews have at times been unprofessional, ill-informed, negative communicators, and pessimistic about the industry for which they are recruiting. The lack of professionalism exhibited by some recruiters is alarming, and as a result, the impression we hold is negative."

Among examples cited: While professors have drummed into students the need to look sharp with jackets and ties, a leading fast-food chain sends a recruiter dressed casually in a sweater; students are given no more than 10 minutes to present their entire background and aspirations; and an information session for students mainly rebukes the food-service industry for various "crummy jobs."

Other negative tidbits: Recruiters fall far behind schedule, forcing students to miss important classes; a recruiter treats students in a "degrading manner"; students do not hear anything pro or con for months after their interviews; and second interviews are scheduled at 9 a.m. at a company headquarters 2½ hours from the campus, and the student is expected to get there the same morning.

Some of the recruiters apparently paint a dim picture of working conditions. Students have been told they can have the privilege of working 70 hours a week for $5 an hour.

We're sure that these horror stories do not apply to the majority of food-service recruiters. We know from personal experience that many food-service recruiters are true professionals with pride in their companies and a desire to attract the best and the brightest. They generally present themselves and their companies well.

But there are exceptions in which the nightmares described above do occur. These cast a blot on the industry and disillusion aspiring students — something the industry can't afford.

Each human resources department must make absolutely sure that the recruiters it sends to campuses or anywhere else are seasoned professionals who present themselves, their companies, and the industry in the best light.

The industry's image rides not only with the impressions made on customers but also on young people who can be its future lifeblood — if they are treated courteously as professionals by professionals.

## LETTERS

### *Kosher Broadway deli takes a family by storm*

Editor, NRN:

Recently I had such an enjoyable experience at a restaurant in New York that I feel compelled to let others know about it, especially since it is fairly new and probably not well known yet.

The restaurant is the Mr. Broadway Deli and Restaurant. It is located at 1372 Broadway, between 37th and 38th streets, in Manhattan.

My wife, our four children, and I were having dinner with other family members and friends to help celebrate the graduation of our two youngest daughters from law school and Vassar. There were almost 40 people in our party. My main course was fresh Norwegian salmon.

Others in the party had rib steaks, various chicken dinners, or a shish kebab. We were served a variety of appetizers, all of a Mideastern nature. We were also served salads and various vegetable dishes.

My salmon was outstanding. I recently had salmon at the Omni International Hotel in St. Louis, and it was extremely well prepared. Mr. Broadway's was even better.

All of the other dishes served were excellent, as was the service. It was my impression that virtually everybody at the party shared my views. In addition, the surroundings were quite pleasant.

The restaurant is strictly kosher. However, you do not have to prefer kosher food to enjoy the meals we were served. They were truly special.

In any event, I certainly recommend it to you and others in New York City.

**— Mark J. Klein**
*attorney*
Kansas City, Mo.

### *Sullivan HRIM program committed to education*

Editor, NRN:

Once again, your publication has overlooked the National Center for Hospitality Studies at Sullivan College.

Several month ago, Nation's Restaurant News published an article on several leading culinary schools, which failed to mention the National Center for Hospitality Studies. We brought this to your attention, and your reply at the time was that, of course, it is not possible to list every school in every article.

Since that time, you recognized the National Center for Hospitality Studies briefly for its achievements at the Culinary Salon at the NRA Show, for which we are appreciative.

However, in your June 12 issue, you once again give comprehensive coverage to a number of HRIM programs and, once again, the National Center for Hospitality Studies was omitted.

I call this to your attention in the hope that you will keep this letter in an active file and consider the inclusion of the National Center the next time you recognize those schools that have made a commitment to quality culinary education in America.

**— Robert Lewis**
*chairman*
Hotel/Restaurant Management Program
The National Center for Hospitality Studies
Sullivan College
Louisville, Ky.

### *Hall of Fame luncheon: Great chance to mingle*

Editor, NRN:

Would you please be kind enough to thank everyone who had a part in making this year's Nation's Restaurant News Fine Dining Hall of Fame luncheon in Chicago so special.

It's such a wonderful opportunity to see people you'd normally never have the opportunity to meet. NRN makes this all possible for so many of us who never get a chance to get to each other's restaurants.

You've been such a good friend to me and Jimmy's Place. I hope I'll be sending you thank you's for many years to come.

**— Jimmy Rohr**
*owner*
Jimmy's Place
Chicago